Should Child Welfare be Transformed into Adult Welfare?

"The current public child welfare system is inherently dysfunctional. A fundamental restructuring of the system will be necessary before it can accommodate any large-scale expansion"

-- LeRoy Pelton (1992)

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| CHANGE FLORIDA LAW SLIDE SHOW |
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TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

- Foster Care
- Adoption
- Adult Welfare Model

Goals for This Evening …

- Review issues facing Child Welfare
- Advance Idea that Adults can be given Ultimatums: Treatment or Jail
- Suggest that Supportive Services can be Provided to Children in their Homes
- Solicit Your Input & Comments

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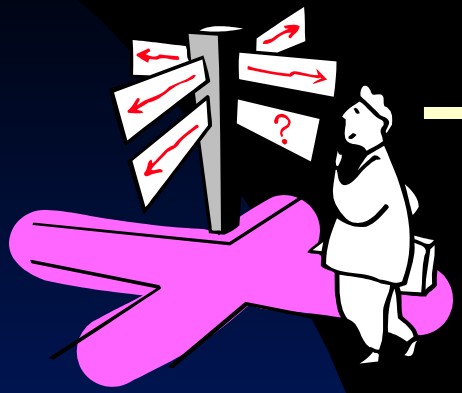
Age Old Trends

- Foster Homes created to move kids back to their families in 1866
- Concrete services begin as Jane Addams begins Hull House – 1889

Current Family Centered Programs

- Family Preservation (early 70's)
- Shared Family Care (pre-SFC late 70's)
- Family Drug Courts (1995 – Panhandle)

WHAT WE'RE DOING NOW : IS IT WORKING?



- Case by Case Factors
- Systemic Factors
- Why 'Inherently Dysfunctional?'

TARA’S STORY

- Age 17 – 4 years in care
- More than 12 foster homes
- Ran away from half of placements
- Left adoptive home / School
- Expecting second child

The Big Picture – Does it Justify Change?

- Issues go deeper than case by case examples
- Imbalances exist
- Rectifying issues likely impossible

Key Problems in Child Welfare

- ENORMOUS GROWTH

  - 245,000 kids in 1961
  - 500,000 kids in 1999
  - 600,000 kids in 2003

Enormous Growth – Do These Justify 600,000?

- Population Increases
- Increased Substance Abuse
- Abuse Awareness / Reporting
- Higher Divorce Rates
- Less Community-Based Services

Placement is Priority

- Finding Placements
- Maintaining Placements
- An Inadvertent Outcome

Common Deficiencies

- Behavioral/Emotional Problems
- Educational Deficiencies

Educational Differences

Foster Kids Vs. Non-Foster Kids

- 67% performed below grade level
- 67% repeated one or more grades
- 39% finished high school - 61% did not
- Non-system Kids go onto college

RESEARCH ISSUES
22-year Review

- 60% of the literature lacked published measuring devices
- 80% of articles lacked control groups
- 73% failed to use statistical tests
- *One* study assessed outcomes

Jail, Welfare, Homelessness and Cyclical Patterns

- 40% of foster children end up on welfare
- 18% of Foster kids go to jail
- 40% of homeless people grew up in care
- 62% of Women from foster care have children who are now in care

Race, Special Needs, and Age

- Largest ethnic group to be adopted: African American (42%)
- Largest ethnic group who adopt: Caucasian (85%)
  - CC adopt AA only 5% of the time
- 70% of kids have special needs
  - People want kids w/out Special Needs
- Average age of child in care is 9
  - People want kids who are 5 or younger

Placement Shifts and Inadequate Services

- Foster children often move 5 times or more during average three - year stay
- Placement shifts prevent service provisions - psychotherapy

LEGAL ISSUES

- Civil courts vs. criminal courts
- These two are seldom linked to each other (as in FDC)

Financial Imbalances

- Assistance for biological parents is 1/5th to 1/9th of that for foster parents
- Biological Parents = $100 / Month
- Foster Parents = $500 - $933 / Month

Lack of Monitoring Mechanism

- 37 States fail to police child welfare departments / programs (74%)
- Only 13 States have Organized Programs to monitor Child Welfare

Minimal Educational Requirement

- Children's Bureau (1912) – Graduate Degree Required to work with youth

- From Graduate, to Bachelor's, to no College Requirement

Failure to prosecute…

- Few abuse/neglect parents go to jail
- Kids are removed from natural homes
- Parents break the law, but children are removed?

Quick Summary

- Case by Case & Research Literature do not look good
- System is Huge / Unable to effectively Help Children
- Children are Removed and Little Happens to Abusive Parents

Preface to Adult Welfare

- Move Mom & Dad
- Child Stays in the Home
- Legally remove Children; legally remove adults

Some of the risks

- Initial investment high – supportive in-home services are expensive
- Legal & political implications: debate, resistance & legal wrangling
- Children will get hurt again

INTRODUCING ADULT WELFARE

- PHASE I – Abuse & Neglect Investigations
- PHASE II – **A**dult Placement & Treatment
- PHASE III – Home Preservation & Youth Services
- PHASE IV – Reunification, Follow-up & Outcomes
- PHASE V – Foster Adoption &

PHASE I
Abuse & Neglect Investigations

- Investigations & Discovery
- Law Enforcement Services

  All charged persons are arrested and taken to jail – just as with all other US criminal processes
- Parental Options

  Prosecuted or may opt for treatment

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PHASE II
Adult Placement & Treatment

- Adult Intervention Services
- 24-hour Family Support
- Concrete / Practical Services
- Health & Education Services
- Specialized Services

PHASE III

Home Preservation & Youth Services

- Child / Family Intervention Services
- 24-hour family support
- Concrete / Practical Services
- Health & Education Services

PHASE IV

Reunification, Follow-up & Outcomes

- Reunification
  - Team Approval
- Aftercare
- Follow-up and Outcomes

PHASE V

Foster Adoption & Child Placement

- Placement
  - Once it occurs is always adoption track
- Foster Adoption placement
  - Team Approval - Can Happen Anytime

Potential / Known Costs

Basic Foster Care	$5,068 (14 Mos.)
Treatment Foster Care	$13,062 (14 Mos.)
Shared Family Care	$7,875 (5 Mos.)
Intensive Family Preservation	$4,200 (1.5 Mos.)
Residential Group Care	$46,800 (13 Mos.)

* Table 1 Barth & Price, 1999, p. 102, *Child Welfare*

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Savings Emotional/Mental

- Logical Comprehension
- Less Childhood Trauma
- Increased Childhood Stability
- Fewer Psychological Services
- Non-Adversarial

Savings Educational

- School Stability
- Fewer Grade Failures
- Fewer School Drop Outs
- Fewer Special Ed Diplomas
- Increased Continuing Education

Savings Social Services

- Fewer Children in the System
- More Adoptions from the System
- Reduced 18-23 Financial Support
- Fewer Welfare Recipients
- Fewer Foster / Group Homes
- Fewer In Prison / Fewer

Savings Familial

- More Parents Raise Own Children
- More Families Remain Intact
- Family Sizes Reduced

What Next?

- Acceptance that system is not working
- Commitment to Change
- Political / Legal Backing
- Funding
- Pilot Program(s)

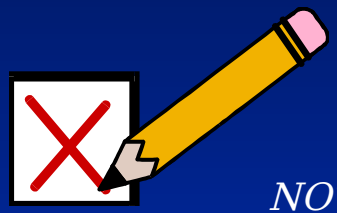
Final Summary

- Two New Ideas:
  - Keeping Kids at Home
  - Foster Adoption
- Child's Best Interest is hard to define
- Current System *is* argument for making a change
- Family Values - about helping families

References & Contact Information

- Thank you for your time.
- Presentation References (next slide)
- For more information please contact:

Kurt LaRose



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